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JAN 06 2006

**OFFICE OF PETITIONS
ON PETITION**

In re Application of :
FORSBERG et al. :
Application No. 10/642,817 :
Filed: August 19, 2003 :
Title of Invention: Candle Wick Maintenance :
Instrument :

This is a decision on the petition filed November 14, 2005, under 37 CFR 1.137(a) to revive the above-identified application.

The petition to revive under 37 CFR § 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR § 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR § 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

This above-identified application became abandoned for failure to timely file a reply to an Office Action mailed February 11, 2005. The Office Action set a one (1) month shortened statutory period for reply. No extensions of time were obtained under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). An untimely response to the Office Action was filed on March 21, 2005. Accordingly, this application became abandoned on March 12, 2005. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on September 7, 2005. A petition filed under 37 CFR 1.137(f) but treated under 37 CFR 1.137(b) was dismissed without review of the merits for lack of petition fee on September 26, 2005.

PETITION TO REVIVE UNDER 37 CFR § 1.137(a)

A grantable petition under 37 CFR § 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

- (1) the required reply,¹
- (2) the petition fee,
- (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Director that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable, and
- (4) a terminal disclaimer and fee if the application was filed on or before June 8, 1995 or if the application is a design application.

The instant petition lacks items (1) and (3).

As to item (1), petitioner has submitted a reply to the non-final Office action with the instant petition. Although the claims begin on a separate sheet, petitioner's election and statement that no claims were added or changed are contained in the petition document. Petitioner should resubmit the information regarding election and no new claims on a separate page pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121.

As to item (3), the showing of record is not sufficient to establish to the satisfaction of the Director that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 37 CFR §1.137(a).

The Office may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." See, 37 CFR § 1.137(a)(3). Decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887) (the term "unavoidable" is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business."); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (D.C. Cir. 1912); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r Pat. 1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case by case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). A petition to revive an application as unavoidably abandoned cannot be granted where petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing the cause of the unavoidable delay. Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2D 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

The showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 133 and 37 CFR 1.137(a).² Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, facsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office.³

Petitioner states that the abandonment was unavoidable due to the timing of the

¹ In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

² See MPEP 711(c)(III)(c)(2) for a discussion of the requirements for a showing of unavoidable delay.

³ Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

mailings, deliveries of the mail services, unfamiliarity with the rules, regulation and processes and the formulation of the response.

Petitioner's arguments have been considered but they are not persuasive. Petitioner's contention that the delay was unavoidable due to unfamiliarity with the rules is not convincing to establish unavoidable delay because a delay caused by an applicant's lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP is not rendered "unavoidable". See In re Sivertz, 227 USPQ 255, 256 (Comm'r Pat. 1985).

To the extent there was a problem with receipt of non-final Office action petitioner has failed to provide any evidence. A review of the record indicates no irregularity in the mailing of the Notice, and in the absence of any irregularity in the mailing, there is a strong presumption that the Office action was properly mailed to the address of record. This presumption may be overcome by a showing that the Notice was not in fact received. The showing required to establish the failure to receive an Office communication must include a statement from the practitioner stating that the Office communication was not received by the practitioner and attesting to the fact that a search of the file jacket and docket records indicates that the Office communication was not received. A copy of the docket record where the non-received Office communication would have been entered had it been received and docketed must be attached to and referenced in practitioner's statement.⁴ The showing outlined above may not be sufficient if there are circumstances that point to a conclusion that the non-final Office Action may have been lost after receipt rather than a conclusion that the non-final Office Action was lost in the mail.

Where applicant is pro se applicant should demonstrate what system is in place upon receipt of communication from the USPTO. If applicant retains documents in a central location, makes use of a computer program or calendar such information as well as any accompanying evidence should be provided on renewed petition. A pro se applicant must state that the file was searched and that the communication in question has not been located. The Office is looking for applicant to make a showing that the communication was not lost after receipt.

Accordingly, petitioner has failed to provide any facts or evidence that may warrant a finding of unavoidable delay.

On any future petition, petitioner must obtain the signature of co-inventor Linda Kay Forsberg, on the petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.33 (2)(b)(4) which requires the signature of all applicants where there is no registered practitioner or an assignee of the entire invention.

Alternative Venue

Petitioner may wish to consider filing a petition to revive based on unintentional

⁴M.P.E.P. § 711.03(c); See Notice entitled "Withdrawing the Holding of Abandonment When Office Actions Are Not Received," 1156 O.G. 53 (November 16, 1993).

abandonment under 37 CFR 1.137(b). A grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the required reply, the required petition fee (\$750.00 for small entity), and a statement that the **entire** delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) was unintentional.

The filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed, and therefore, must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay cannot make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137(b).

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Mail Stop Petition
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (571) 273-8300

By delivery service: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
(FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc.) Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Telephone inquiries should be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3215.

Charlema R. Grant
Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions